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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Second periodic reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant in accordance with the programme established by Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/4

Addendum

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC */

[10 May 1989]

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*/ The initial reports concerning rights covered by articles 6 to 9 (E/1978/8/Add.25 and Add.31) and articles 10 to 12 (E/1980/6/Add.9) submitted by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic were considered by the Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its 1983 and 1981 sessions respectively (see E/1983/WG.1/SR.2 and E/1981/WG.1/SR.4).

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INTRODUCTION

1. The area of the Syrian Arab Republic is 185,180 km^2. In 1985, the area of arable land was approximately 3,970,000 ha, including 652,000 ha under irrigation and 3,318,000 ha dependent on rainfall.

2. According to the statistical estimates made in 1985, Syria has a population of 10,267,000 with a density of 55.5 inhabitants per km^2; 47 per cent of the population is urban and 53 per cent, rural. The proportion of children under five years of age is approximately 16 per cent and that of women of child-bearing age 20 per cent. The crude mortality rate is 8.4 per thousand, while the infant mortality rate among children in their first year is 63.38 per thousand live births and the mortality rate among children between the ages of one and four is 5.4 per thousand. The annual growth rate of the population is 33.6 per thousand. The labour force comprises 72 per cent of the population and the rate of illiteracy among workers is 22 per cent. The proportion of students attending schools, educational institutes and universities is 22 per cent of the total population.

3. In 1983, aggregate public and private final consumption expenditure was LS 65,735 million, with average final consumption expenditure per household amounting to some LS 42,685. Average final household expenditure consumption for the country as a whole accounted for 96.2 per cent of average household income, whereas average per capita income in rural areas amounted to some 97.6 per cent of average final consumption expenditure per capita for the country as a whole and average income in urban areas amounted to about 94.9 per cent of average final consumption expenditure per capita for the country as a whole.

4. The Syrian Arab Republic is a democratic, people's socialist State and forms part of the Arab nation. The system of government is republican and the Arab Baath Socialist Party is the leading party, both in society and in the State, at the head of a progressive national front, endeavouring to harness the capacities of the masses and mobilize them in furtherance of the objectives of the Arab nation.

5. The People's Council is a democratically elected body through which citizens exercise their rights in regard to the administration of the affairs of State and the guidance of society (art. 10 of the Constitution). Freedom is a sacred right, and the State guarantees the personal freedom of citizens and safeguards their dignity and security (art. 25, para. 1). The rule of law is a fundamental principle in society and in the State (art. 25, para. 2). All citizens have equal rights and duties before the law (art. 25, para. 3), and every citizen has the right to take part in political, economic, social and cultural life (art. 26). Citizens exercise their rights and freedoms in accordance with the law (art. 27). No one may be subjected to investigation or arrested except in accordance with the law (art. 28, para. 2). No one may be subjected to physical or mental torture or degrading treatment, and the law specifies the penalties to be imposed on anyone engaging in such practices (art. 28, para. 3). The right to institute legal proceedings and make use of means of recourse and defence before the courts is protected by the law (art. 28, para. 4). There are no crimes or penalties other than those defined by statute laws (art. 29). Homes are inviolable and may be neither entered nor searched except in the circumstances specified by law (art. 31).

6. The confidentiality of postal correspondence and telecommunications is guaranteed in accordance with the provisions of the law (art. 32). No citizen may be expelled from the national territory (art. 33, para. 1). All citizens enjoy freedom of movement within the territory of the State (art. 33, para. 2). Freedom of belief is safeguarded, and the State respects all religions (art. 35, para. 1). The State guarantees freedom to perform all religious rites, provided that they are not prejudicial to public order (art. 35, para. 2). Every citizen has the right to express his opinion freely and publicly in speech, in writing or by any other means of expression and the State guarantees freedom of the press and freedom of printing and publication in accordance with the law (art. 38). Citizens have the right to assemble and demonstrate peacefully, in a manner consistent with the principles of the Constitution, the exercise of this right being regulated by the law (art. 39).

I. ARTICLES 6 TO 9 OF THE COVENANT

7. The labour legislation of the Syrian Arab Republic focuses on the social and economic functions of such legislation, with emphasis on the social situation of the labour force and the working environment. This includes, first, the provision of statistical information on the labour force and job opportunities, the planning of employment, training and vocational guidance; secondly, working conditions and terms of employment, monitoring through supervision and inspection, the consolidation of collective labour relations on the basis of trade-union organizations and attention to the legislative regulation of labour matters; and, finally, the achievement of the objective pursued, namely, the promotion of comprehensive development in general.

8. The Arab Baath Socialist Party, which leads the State and society in the Syrian Arab Republic, attaches great importance to industrial relations and, from the Party's point of view, the social organization of work centres on the following points:

(a) The provision of work for all persons capable thereof;

(b) The right to work and the elimination of unemployment;

(c) The maintenance of discipline at work;

(d) The participation of workers in socialist competitions;

(e) Occupational safety;

(f) The possibility of combining work with study;

(g) Remuneration based on the quantity and quality of work;

(h) Broad worker participation in enterprise management;

(i) Social security.

9. Two basic statutes have been enacted since the submission of the country's first report, namely:

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(a) Legislative Decree No. 30, of 17 September 1982, which amends some of the provisions of Legislative Decree No. 84 of 1968, concerning the trade-union organization of the labour force. The most important new provisions contained in the decree are as follows:

(i) No fixed number of workers is required to set up a trade-union committee within a labour sector;

(ii) The new decree sets forth a number of objectives concerning the protection of public property and the defence of the interests of the workers;

(iii) The scope of trade-union powers has been broadened in matters pertaining to labour, production and services;

(iv) Foreign workers have been permitted to join trade-union organizations, subject to the principle of reciprocity;

(v) The term of elective office has been lengthened from two to four years;

(vi) The membership of the workers' federation councils in the various governorates and that of the Council of the General Federation of Trade Unions have been expanded;

(b) The Civil Service Act No. 1 of 2 January 1985, which entered into force on 2 January 1986, applies to all persons working in ministries, government departments, municipal institutions, local administrative units and all other bodies in the public sector. By decision of the Council of Ministers, this Act may also be applied in full or in part to the staff of mixed-sector stock companies in which the State has a majority holding. The most important provisions of this Act are as follows:

(i) The persons covered by its provisions are subject to a single set of rules, and this applies to over 90 per cent of the staff of State institutions, excluding members of the armed forces and the internal security forces, whereas all persons working in the private sector are subject to the provisions of the Standard Labour Code, No. 91/1959, as amended. Terms of employment were thereby harmonized in respect of all personnel employed in the various State institutions;

(ii) The workers subject to the provisions of the new Act are divided into five categories according to their qualifications;

(iii) Five wage scales are set out in a schedule specifying the starting wage at the time of appointment and the maximum wage that may be earned in each category;

(iv) Labour relations between the workers subject to the Act and the bodies employing them have been established on an organized basis, superseding all contractual relations in operation prior to its entry into force;

(v) The new Act redefines wages as the monthly lump sum which the worker earns in consideration of the performance of the work assigned to him on engagement. The various benefits are no longer included in the concept of wages, with the exception of production bonuses which are included under the new Act;

(vi) All the workers subject to the new Act are also subject to the provisions of the Law on Unionization enacted under Legislative Decree No. 84 of 1968, as amended;

(vii) The workers are subject to a standard insurance law.

10. It should be noted that the promulgation of the Civil Service Act was a matter of national necessity, aimed at: standardizing the legislation governing labour relations in respect of workers employed in the various State institutions; striking a balance between the rights and obligations of such workers; rationalizing the statutes concerning benefits, especially those relating to the nature of the work performed and specialization; reaffirming the principle that wages are paid in consideration of work performed.

A. Articles 6 and 7: the right to work, and the right to enjoy just and favourable conditions of work

11. The State shall guarantee intellectual or manual work for every citizen (art. 4, para. 1, of the Constitution of the Arab Baath Socialist Party, 1947). The State shall endeavour to provide work for all citizens (art. 36, para. 1 of the Constitution).

12. This right is exercised through work.

13. Since the promulgation of the Civil Service Act No. 1 of 2 January 1985, the right to work has been exercised on the basis of competition or selection (art. 8 of Act No. 1, 1985).

14. As regards the measures that the State is taking to promote sustained economic, social and cultural development and full, productive employment, attention should be drawn to the Syrian Government's reports on International Labour Conventions Nos. 122, 1964, and 142, 1975, concerning employment policy and the development of human resources respectively. Indeed, the Syrian Arab Republic submits periodic reports on both those conventions, although it has not ratified them. In that connection, reference should also be made to the five-year plans for economic and social development, the implementation of which was begun in 1960, making service to the people and the achievement of full employment the objective of development. Syria ratified International Labour Convention No. 81, 1947, concerning labour inspection in industry and trade, and Convention No. 129, 1969, concerning labour inspection in agriculture. Syria also submits periodic reports on the application of those two conventions.

15. The Ministry of Education supervises technical education, whereas the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform supervises agricultural, veterinary and vocational training. General education is free at all stages. The Ministry of Construction supervises the vocational training centres

providing building and construction training free of charge. A number of intermediate-level training institutes for semi-professional staff (about 100 institutes) have been established under various ministries and teach both theoretical and practical skills free of charge. The General Federation of Trade Unions and the General Federation of Farmers both operate institutes that train workers and farmers with a view to providing skilled labour. Public bodies are responsible for training their own work-force and developing its skills in accordance with their internal regulations (art. 18). Pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 54 of 27 January 1970, the vocational training centres for the disabled run by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour provide training for disabled persons, replacing their health certificates by vocational training certificates. The Ministry of Labour is responsible for finding employment for skilled disabled persons in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Code No. 91 of 1959 (arts. 23 to 32).

16. As regards protection against dismissal, it is interesting to note that agricultural workers enjoy no protection whatsoever to prevent their employers from dismissing them (Act No. 134/1958), whereas a worker engaged in accordance with the Labour Code No. 91 of 1959 enjoys statutory protection against dismissal. Article 132 of Legislative Decree No. 49 of 1962 lists the 10 reasons for which the services of a worker may be terminated, as follows: attainment of the age of 60; resignation or its equivalent; dismissal for health reasons; establishment of the unsuitability of a worker on probation; dismissal because of poor performance on the job; disciplinary dismissal; expulsion; abolition of the post; separation from service; death.

17. As regards protection against unemployment, the situation of Israeli occupation since 1948 has imposed on Syria a state of preparedness in which it has had to devote a large share of its resources to the defence of the country against the Israeli enemy. It has therefore been unable to enjoy its natural right to develop and provide suitable employment opportunities for all those able and willing to work. Indeed, Syria has been unable to ensure the full employment of its labour force and overcome unemployment decisively, although urgent steps have been taken to that end. For that purpose, employment offices have been set up in the centres of the various governorates in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Code. These employment offices register the names of the unemployed and persons entering the job market for the first time, and submit their candidature for employment in the enterprises and bodies subject to the employment regulations. The employment process is so organized only in respect of persons engaged in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Code No. 91/1959, as amended.

18. Under article 12 of the Labour Code No. 91/1959, any unemployed person may apply for registration at a placement office (employment office) operated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. The employment offices find job opportunities for the persons registered with them, and workers are employed in the jobs available strictly on the basis of the date of their registration with the employment office.

19. Income from work must ensure at least a decent standard of living (art. 40, para. 2, of the Constitution of the Party), and every citizen is entitled to remuneration according to the nature and output of his work. The

State is responsible for guaranteeing that right (art. 36, para. 2). Wages are fixed by a commission, established in the administrative centre of each governorate by decision of the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, whose membership includes government delegates as well as representatives of the workers and employers (art. 156 of the Labour Code). These commissions fix wages on an annual basis. However, in exceptional cases such as an economic crisis, a monetary devaluation or a sharp rise in the cost of living, the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour may call a general meeting of all the wage-fixing commissions to consider an adjustment of wages (art. 159 of the Labour Code).

20. Real wages and minimum wages were increased in the public and private sectors, as well as in the mixed-economy sector, in 1985 and 1987 pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 25/1985, and Act No. 6 of 1987. The Labour Code, the Civil Service Act No. 135/1945 and the Civil Service Act No. 1/1985 contain provisions concerning the protection of wages, the body responsible for the payment of wages, the place and time of payment, protection against the withholding of more than one quarter of the wages, etc. Syrian legislation does not provide for any discrimination in remuneration between men and women or nationals and foreigners. Equal remuneration must be paid for work of equal value, and wages are linked to output. Act No. 6 of 1987, concerning wage increments, provided for the establishment of a commission, attached to the office of the Prime Minister, to maintain a balance between wages and prices. One of the conditions to be fulfilled in fixing the minimum wage is that it should be sufficient to meet the basic needs of the workers, although actual wages are usually higher than the minimum wage, depending on a worker's length of service with a particular employer or public body and his ability.

21. Despite all the difficulties faced by the national economy due to the state of constant Israeli aggression supported by world imperialism, and the world-wide economic crisis, it can be said that wage levels in Syria allow workers and their families to lead a decent life, especially if the following amenities provided by the Government are taken into account: subsidies for many consumer goods which are retailed at low prices; free education at all stages; health insurance and the extensive network of government hospitals and clinics; low prices of pharmaceutical products, communications and clothing as compared with those charged in neighbouring countries.

22. As regards occupational safety, it is incumbent upon every employer or his representative to make his workers aware, prior to their engagement, of the hazards inherent in their occupation and of the precautionary measures to be taken (art. 107). Every employer must take the necessary precautions to protect his workers against damage to their health during work and the dangers associated with the work and machinery. Moreover, the employer may neither request the workers to pay nor deduct from their wages any amount in consideration of the provision of such protection (art. 108). The Minister of Social Affairs and Labour issued decision No. 1112/1973, concerning the protection of workers against the dangers of harmful radiation.

23. As regards the statutory provisions governing working hours, rest and terms of employment, the Civil Service Act stipulates that, by decision of the Prime Minister, actual working time must be not less than six hours and not more than eight hours per day. All workers are entitled to at least one day's

rest with pay every week (art. 43, para. 3). Workers also enjoy leave with full pay on official holidays, and public bodies have an obligation to grant annual leave to all members of their staff. Furthermore, in each year of service a worker is entitled to sick leave for 200 days, during which he receives 80 per cent of his wages for the first 30 days, and full wages for the following 170 days (art. 48 (a)).

24. Industrial injuries sustained, and occupational diseases contracted, by workers covered by the said Act are governed by the provisions on industrial injuries set forth in the Social Insurance Act, No. 92/1959 (art. 53 (a)). Women workers are granted maternity leave with full pay for 75 days, normally in the ninth month of pregnancy, and such leave is granted in full even in the event of a stillbirth (art. 54 (a)). An extension of maternity leave for one month with 80 per cent pay and for a further month without pay is granted to pregnant workers who apply for it (art. 54 (e)). Workers who breast-feed their child are granted a break of one full hour per day throughout the first year of the child's life (art. 54 (f)).

25. A worker is entitled to one week's leave with full pay in the event of his or her marriage, and to five consecutive days off work in the event of the death of one of his or her ascendants or descendants or his or her spouse, brother or sister, these days not being deducted from his or her annual leave entitlement (art. 55). Special leave without pay for an aggregate or single period not exceeding four years throughout the worker's term of service may be granted on submission of a written request to that effect for reasons acceptable to the public body concerned (art. 57). Such leave is not counted in the calculation of the effective term of service if it exceeds three months during the said term (art. 58 (b)).

26. In the case of agricultural workers employed on an annual basis, working time has been set at 2,700 hours spread over 300 working days in the year, with the stipulation that working time must not exceed 60 hours per week. The working time of those not employed on an annual basis is 54 hours per week. Agricultural workers are entitled to one hour's rest if their daily working time exceeds six hours (art. 103 of the Agricultural Labour Relations Regulatory Act). A weekly rest period of at least 24 consecutive hours must be granted to them, irrespective of their category (art. 105), but there is no provision to the effect that such leave must be with pay. Agricultural workers who have spent 10 months or more without interruption in the service of an employer must be granted annual leave for two weeks with full pay (art. 107). Leave entitlements may be accumulated over two years (art. 111). A worker must be given leave on the major annual festivals particular to his religion, provided that such holidays with pay do not exceed seven days per year (art. 6). Agricultural workers who contract a non-occupational disease or fall victim to a non-industrial accident after spending at least six months in the service of an employer are entitled to sick leave on the following basis: one month with full pay; one month without pay.

B. Article 8. Trade-union rights

27. In Syria, the right of association was first instituted by the enactment of Legislative Decree No. 152 of 18 September 1935, concerning the liberal professions and craftsmen. The General Federation of Trade Unions was established on 18 March 1937.

28. Article 40, paragraph 5, of the Party Constitution provides for the establishment of free trade unions for workers and farmers as effective instruments to defend their rights, improve their living standards, broaden the opportunities available to them, create a spirit of solidarity between them and represent them before the higher labour courts. The Constitution grants the popular masses the right to establish trade union, social and professional organizations, and production or service co-operatives, the framework, interrelationships and operational scope of which are prescribed by law.

29. Under article 49 of the Constitution, the people's organizations are entitled to play an effective part in the various sectors and on the councils established by law in pursuance of the following aims:

(a) To construct a socialist Arab society and protect its system;

(b) To plan and guide the socialist economy;

(c) To improve working conditions, safety, health, culture and all other aspects of the life of the individual;

(d) To further scientific and technological progress and develop production methods;

(e) To ensure the people's control over the machinery of government.

30. Act No. 21 of 20 April 1974 gave birth to the General Federation of Farmers, and under article 5 of that Act the objectives of the farmers' organizations are:

(a) To spread and deepen class-consciousness, consolidate the national and socialist struggle, and emphasize the necessity and importance of organizing the farmers in order to boost production, increase national income, improve the farmers' economic, social, cultural and health conditions and ensure the fulfilment of their obligations;

(b) To substitute the socialist system of relationships for all others and to make the farmers aware of their fundamental role in the revolutionary struggle against division, backwardness and colonialism;

(c) To combat bureaucracy by increasing the awareness of the farmers and providing them with guidance in the application of the laws concerning the development of rural areas;

(d) To contribute to the success of the agricultural revolution, the introduction and use of new methods in agriculture, the protection of labour and production;

(e) To market crops and agricultural produce on their own account or on behalf of their members.

31. Legislative Decree No. 84/1968 had the following objectives:

(a) To eliminate completely the principle of appointment to senior trade-union posts and adopt that of election at all levels of trade-union organization;

(b) To lay down clear principles for the establishment of trade-union committees in each labour sector and by the workers of individual employers;

(c) To encourage the trade-union movement, build confidence in it and strengthen its organizations in order to increase the cohesive unity of the working class, through:

(i) The offices of the trade-union organizations, which are the competent authorities and sole means of recourse for appeal in all matters pertaining to a worker's membership of a trade union or exclusion therefrom;

(ii) The Executive Office of the General Federation, which is responsible for notifying and warning the subordinate offices with a view to remedying any shortcomings and irregularities that may be imputed to them and, if necessary, closing them down;

(iii) The right of the workers' federations in the various governorates to control and call to account their trade-union offices and submit proposals to the General Federation with a view to the adoption of appropriate measures;

(d) To accord legal protection to trade-union property and vest the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour with the right to supervise such property.

32. Under article 2 of Legislative Decree No. 84/1968, every labour sector may establish a trade-union committee to serve as its trade-union organization.

33. The trade-union committees in each profession may establish a trade union vested with corporate personality in their particular governorate (art. 5). A trade union is therefore an organization of workers engaged in the same occupation in the same governorate.

34. The trade unions in a single governorate may establish a federation with headquarters in Damascus (art. 6). A trade-union federation is therefore an organization of workers engaged in a single occupation or group of occupations at the national level.

35. The local trade unions and the trade-union federations may establish a country-wide General Federation of Trade Unions with headquarters in Damascus (art. 7). The General Federation of Trade Unions is the trade-union organization of workers in all occupations at the national level.

36. The country's General Federation of Trade Unions is a member of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

37. The country's trade-union federations are affiliated to their Arab and international counterparts.

38. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is bound by International Labour Convention No. 87, 1948, concerning freedom of association and protection of the right to organize, which was ratified under the terms of Act No. 944 of 1960. The Government is also bound by International Labour Convention No. 98, 1949, concerning the right to organize and collective bargaining, which it ratified under the terms of Act No. 373 of 1957. The right to organize is exercised in accordance with Legislative Decree No. 84/1968, as amended.

39. The State has eliminated the need for workers to resort to strikes by adopting the policy of collective labour contracts and regulating the conciliation and arbitration bodies and procedures applicable to collective disputes between workers and their employers.

40. Part II, section 3, and articles 89 to 106 of the Labour Code regulate collective labour contracts, which are agreements governing terms of employment between one or more trade unions, on the one hand, and the employers of workers who are members of those trade unions, or organizations representing such employers, on the other. Part V of the Labour Code (art. 188-210) regulates the conciliation and arbitration procedures in respect of labour disputes. Labour disputes are dealt with in two stages, namely, conciliation and arbitration. Article 209 of the Labour Code prohibits workers from striking or stopping work wholly or in part where conciliation has been requested or while proceedings are under way before the competent administrative authority, the conciliation committee or the board of arbitration. Likewise, the employer may stop work wholly or in part only if he is compelled to do so for valid reasons and after he has been given the approval of the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour in reply to a request sent by registered mail, on the basis of which the Minister will take a decision.

41. Under article 65 of the Civil Service Act (para. 2, subparas. (g) and (h)), workers are prohibited from taking part in the organization of any meetings at the work-place which are inconsistent with the provisions of the laws and regulations in force, or leaving, stopping or suspending work in order to disrupt, halt or impede production, and inciting workers to do so.

C. Article 9. The right to social security

42. The State shall guarantee the livelihood of all persons incapacitated from work and shall enact just labour legislation, specifying daily hours of work, granting the workers paid weekly rest periods and annual leave, protecting their rights and providing social insurance in old age and compensation for total or partial incapacitation from work (art. 40 of the Party Constitution).

43. "The State shall specify hours of work, guarantee social security for the workers and regulate their entitlement to rest, leave, benefits and allowances" (art. 36, para. 3).

44. "The State shall provide for all citizens and their families in the event of an accident, sickness, disability or orphanhood and in old age. The State shall protect the health of its citizens and provide them with preventive, curative and medicative facilities" (art. 46).

45. "The State shall provide cultural, social and health services and, in particular, shall endeavour to make such services available in the villages in order to raise the living standards of their population" (art. 47).

46. On the basis of the provisions of the Constitution, the State therefore guarantees social security to the workers and provides for citizens and their families in the event of an accident, sickness, disability or orphanhood and in old age.

1. Medical care

47. Under article 65 of the Labour Code, employers are bound to provide their workers with first-aid facilities and medical care on the premises, and on a scale commensurate with the number of workers employed. This includes the appointment of a nurse and the conclusion of a contract with a doctor to examine the workers, provide free medication and perform surgical and other specialized operations.

48. Under article 25 of the Social Insurance Act, the Social Insurance Authority is responsible for treating workers who have suffered an industrial accident until the time of their recovery or the establishment of their disability. If the accident results in total or permanent disability or death, the pension payable is calculated on the basis of 75 per cent of the average monthly pensionable wage earned in the last year (art. 29 of the Act). If the accident results in permanent partial disability assessed at 35 per cent or more of total disability, the injured worker is entitled to a pension equivalent to that percentage of the total disability pension (art. 30 of the Act). The Authority provides the necessary rehabilitation services, including artificial limbs (art. 35). The employer must provide first-aid facilities at the work-place (art. 38) and commission one or more physicians to examine workers exposed to the contraction of an occupational disease, such examination being conducted on a periodic basis at such times as may be prescribed by the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour (art. 43).

2. Sickness benefits

49. Under article 63 of the Labour Code, a worker whose sickness has been certified is entitled to the equivalent of 70 per cent of his wage for the first 90 days and to 80 per cent of his wage for the following 90 days in the same year. Agricultural workers who contract a non-occupational disease or suffer a non-industrial accident after spending at least six months in the service of an employer are entitled to sick leave on the following basis: one month with full pay; one month without pay.

50. Under Act No. 1/1985, in each year of service a worker is entitled to sick leave for 200 days, consecutive or otherwise, during which he receives 80 per cent of his wage for the first 30 days and full wages for the following 170 days, sick leave being counted as effective service.

3. Disability, old age and survivors' benefits

51. A person is entitled to an old-age pension in the following cases (art. 57 of the Insurance Act):

(a) Termination of services, because the insured has reached the age of 60 and accumulated at least 15 years of pensionable service;

(b) Resignation following the accumulation of at least 20 years of pensionable service, provided that the person resigning has reached the age of 55.

52. Entitlement to a total disability or survivors' pension is subject to the condition that the contributions paid in respect of the insured must amount to at least 6 consecutive monthly contributions or 12 intermittent contributions (art. 63).

4. Health insurance

53. In accordance with Act No. 1 of 6 February 1979, the Public Health Insurance Authority was established with the aim of providing health insurance for Syrian citizens within a maximum period of 10 years from the date of entry into force of that Act. Such health insurance covers treatment and medical care for the beneficiaries in respect of sickness, accidents, pregnancy and childbirth. Health insurance is financed from the following sources:

(a) The monthly contributions deducted from the insured, which do not exceed 2 per cent of their salaries, wages or pensions and benefits and allowances;

(b) The contributions paid by public and mixed-sector bodies, which amount to 3 per cent of the salaries, wages, benefits and allowances of the persons covered by the scheme;

(c) The token fees and charges paid by beneficiaries in consideration of the medical services provided for them;

(d) Subsidies from the Government and other bodies, voluntary contributions and bequests.

54. Every person covered by the health insurance scheme is entitled to a survivors' benefit in the amount of 10,000 Syrian pounds exempt from all taxes.

II. ARTICLES 10 TO 12 OF THE COVENANT

A. Article 10. Protection of the family and of mothers and children

55. Article 44 of the Permanent Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, promulgated in 1973, emphasizes that the family is the nuclear unit of society and is protected by the State. Paragraph 2 of the same article stipulates that: "The State shall protect and encourage marriage and endeavour to eliminate material and social impediments thereto. It shall protect mothers and children, take care of young people and provide them with conditions

conducive to the development of their faculties." Article 46 of the Constitution further stipulates that "the State shall provide for every citizen and his family in the event of an accident, sickness, disability or orphanhood and in old age".

56. Family matters and the protection of children in Syria are regulated by the Personal Status Act, promulgated under Legislative Decree No. 59 of 1953, which prescribes that marriage is to be contracted on the basis of a proposal by one of the parties and acceptance by the other. Article 1 of that Act states that marriage is a lawful contract between a man and a woman aimed at establishing a bond for the purpose of leading a common life and begetting offspring. Like any other contract requiring legal capacity and consent, marriage is contracted on the basis of a proposal from one of the parties and acceptance by the other (art. 5). Under the provisions of article 15 of the said Act, fitness for marriage in terms of soundness of mind and legal majority is a condition. Article 19 requires the prospective spouses to be of compatible ages and, if there is a disparity between their ages and marriage is not advisable, the judge may deny permission to marry. Furthermore, article 26 requires that the man should be a suitable match for the woman, and the woman has the right to demand such suitability (art. 29). A valid marriage entails all the corresponding marital rights such as dowry, maintenance, inheritance between spouses and affiliation of the children (art. 49). The husband must accommodate his wife in a dwelling suited to her status. He must not install a second wife in the same dwelling with her without her consent. If he has several wives, he must treat them equally as regards their accommodation. Furthermore, the husband must not accommodate any of his relatives in the same dwelling with his wife, with the exception of a young son who has not yet come of age. The husband must maintain his wife. Under article 37 of the Personal Status Act, a man is allowed to have more than one wife, but article 39 prohibits simultaneous marriage to two sisters or to a woman and her paternal or maternal aunt. There are two conditions to be fulfilled in this regard, namely, that a second marriage should be legitimately justified and that the husband should be in a position to maintain two wives at the same time.

57. Child custody is entrusted to the woman until a specified statutory age, and the father must provide for them both. The wife has the right to request a divorce if conjugal life between the two parties is impossible (art. 112 of the Personal Status Act).

58. The State has made amendments to that Act under Act No. 34 of 31 December 1975, extending the period during which child custody is entrusted to the woman to 9 years of age in respect of boys and 11 in respect of girls, whereas it was previously 7 years in respect of boys and 9 in respect of girls. In addition, cases of divorce have been restricted in order to protect the family from disintegration and dissolution. To that end, article 11 of the amending Act provides as follows:

(a) When a divorce suit or dispute is brought before a court, the judge must adjourn the hearing for an entire month in the hope of reconciliation;

(b) If, after the expiration of that period, the husband still insists on divorce or if both parties insist on divorce with compensation to the husband, the judge must summon the two parties, hear their differences and

endeavour to settle them with a view to the continuation of conjugal life, with the assistance of such relatives of the spouses and other persons as he may consider capable of settling the dispute;

(c) If those attempts are unsuccessful, the judge must allow the registration of the divorce to proceed, with or without compensation to the husband, and the divorce takes effect as from the date of its pronouncement.

59. Under the above-mentioned amendments, the judge may order the father to provide for the maintenance of the children as from four months prior to the hearing (art. 23 of the amending Act). If a man divorces his wife without reason, and she is faced with hardship on his death, she is entitled under the law to receive compensation equivalent to three years' maintenance (art. 16), and the Director of Orphans is entrusted with the supervision of the affairs of their minor children in their interests (art. 28).

60. Legislative Decree No. 63 of 24 September 1973 provides for the payment of a dependency allowance in respect of male children pursuing their secondary education up to the age of 21 years, and in respect of male children pursuing their higher education up to the age of 26 years. The standard labour law promulgated under Act No. 1 of 1985, provides for maternity leave with full pay to be granted to women workers for a period of 75 days, normally beginning in the ninth month of pregnancy. Such leave is granted in full even in the event of a stillbirth (art. 54 of the Act). In conformity with the provisions of the Constitution, the Social Insurance Act No. 92 of 1959, as amended by Act No. 143 of 1961, entitles government employees and the personnel of public bodies and institutions and local administrative units to a pension in the event of disability and in old age in accordance with the relevant provisions set forth in articles 55 to 66 of the Act.

B. Article 11. The right to an adequate standard of living

61. The Syrian Arab Republic has devoted great attention to the agricultural sector on account of its important role in the economic development process as the primary source of the necessities of life for the individual, such as food and clothing. It has done so in order to develop that sector and increase agricultural production in furtherance of the policy of food security. This is reflected in the Constitution, which stipulates that the national economy is a planned, socialist economy aimed at eliminating all forms of exploitation. Indeed, article 14, paragraph 1, stipulates that the property of the people comprises the natural resources, the public utilities and the national establishment and institutions set up by the State and the operation and management of which are controlled by the State in the interests of the people as a whole, it being the duty of citizens to protect such property.

62. Article 16 sets a limit on the amount of agricultural landholding, in order to ensure the protection of farmers and agricultural workers against exploitation and increase production.

63. Article 20, concerning the operation of private and mixed-sector economic institutions, is intended to meet social needs, increase national income and provide the people with a satisfactory standard of living.

64. Article 24, paragraph 1, provides that science, scientific research and all scientific achievements are vital to the progress of socialist Arab society, and must therefore be fully supported by the State.

65. The Eighth National Conference held at Damascus from 15 to 20 January 1985 stressed the need to devote more attention to the agricultural sector and intensify efforts in that sector in order to achieve food security in Syria, to secure the raw materials required for industry and to reduce the volume of food imports, which had become a burden on the country's trade balance. In addition, the Conference recommended that the development of agronomic research should be continued and that agricultural extension services be intensified. The Conference further stressed that the agricultural sector must be given precedence in the allocation of investments under the sixth five-year plan for 1986-1990 and that appropriate action should be taken to enhance the effectiveness of such investments in order:

(a) To develop rural areas and reduce the disparity between such areas and the towns by:

(i) Increasing and improving agricultural production in both crop farming and livestock husbandry;

(ii) Making optimum use of natural agricultural resources, i.e. land and water, in order to increase the output of crop farming and livestock husbandry, and concentrating on improving the productivity of local breeds and varieties;

(iii) Increasing the proportion of arable land actually in use;

(iv) Making full use of the country's water resources in order to increase the area of arable land under irrigation;

(v) Putting to effective use all the land reclaimed both before and during the sixth five-year plan;

(vi) Increasing the productivity of natural pasture land, especially in the Syrian desert;

(vii) Achieving integration between the crop and livestock husbandry;

(b) To strike a balance between horizontal and vertical growth in the agricultural sector and between the various branches of the sector (crop farming, livestock husbandry, irrigation and land reclamation, fisheries and forestry);

(c) To enhance production infrastructure in the agricultural sector, particularly by developing agricultural co-operatives and increasing their contribution to overall production;

(d) To improve the basic services supporting agricultural production and enhance their effectiveness in the following areas:

(i) Veterinary care and artificial insemination;

(ii) Agronomic research and agricultural extension services, training and teaching;

(iii) The mechanization of agriculture;

(iv) Pest control and crop and livestock protection;

(v) The formulation of rational and effective policies aimed at increasing agricultural production and farm income, particularly in the areas of pricing, financing and agricultural exports.

66. The country's pioneering experience in the area of land reform dates back to 1958 with the enactment of the Agrarian Reform Act No. 161, as amended, which was followed by Act No. 88 of 1963, taking account of land productivity, quality of the soil and local rainfall.

67. In order to supply all citizens with food and clothing (and even housing requirements) of the highest quality and in the most rational manner, in pursuance of food security, a network of production, distribution, transport and storage enterprises was set up under various ministries. The most significant of them are reviewed below, preceded by reference to basic statistics to clarify the picture.

(a) The ratio of persons employed in the public sector to the total number of persons employed increased from 20 per cent in 1979 to 21.7 per cent in 1983, and the figure is much higher at present (in 1988).

(b) The public sector's share of imports increased from 75 per cent in 1979 to 88 per cent in 1984.

(c) The contribution of the public and co-operative sectors to the supply of goods to consumers increased from 9 per cent in 1979 to 13.4 per cent in 1984.

(d) The public sector's share of wholesale trade in consumer goods increased to 50 per cent of the total volume of wholesale trade in consumer goods.

(e) Sale by trading enterprises and companies in the public sector increased from 6 billion Syrian pounds in 1979 to 22 billion Syrian pounds in 1984.

(f) Between 1979 and 1984, the number of farmers' co-operatives increased from 3,501 to 4,103, with an increase in co-operative membership to 433,791 by the end of September 1984, i.e. an increase of 128,947 members over and above the figure for 1979.

(g) The area of productive arable land managed by the farmers' co-operatives increased from 1.533 million hectares in 1980 to 1.816 million hectares in 1984, thereby increasing the ratio of such lands to the country's total area of productive land from 27 per cent in 1980 to 34 per cent in 1984.

(h) The area under irrigation increased from 538,000 hectares in 1979 to 580,000 hectares in 1984.

(i) Between 1979 and 1984, the production of food grain increased from 1.32 to 1.612 million tons; fodder, from 474,000 to 1.131 million tons; industrial crops, from 691,000 to 1.745 million tons; vegetables, from 2.512 to 3.609 million tons; fruit, from 845,000 to 1.121 million tons; meat and fish, from 109,000 to 241,000 tons; milk, from 839,000 to 1.193 million tons; sugar (from beet) from 24,000 to 125,000 tons; potatoes, from 235,000 to 265,000 tons; tomatoes, from 458,000 to 691,000 tons; apples, from 76,300 to 118,000 tons; citrus fruit, from 156,000 to 192,000 tons; grapes, from 287,000 to 433,000 tons; eggs, from 1.183 million to 2.064 million units; and cotton yarn, from 86 to 99 million metres.

(j) The overall storage capacity of grain silos increased from 610,000 to 770,000 tons and that of refrigerated warehouses from 90,000 to 150,000 cubic metres.

(k) The number of public sales outlets increased from 1.053 to 1.784.

(l) Net domestic product per capita increased from 4,531 Syrian pounds in 1979 to 7,830 Syrian pounds in 1983 at current prices, and from 5,520 to 6,139 Syrian pounds at constant prices.

68. It must be pointed out that State trading activities are carried on by a network of 19 specialized companies and enterprises. Thirteen of them operate internally under the supervision of the Ministries of Supply, Domestic Trade, Industry and Agriculture, while the other six engage in foreign trade, although they are also active on the domestic market, as they work together to procure, store and distribute foodstuffs, each within its own sphere of competence (i.e. in import and export trade, and wholesale and retail trade). The 13 domestic trade enterprises engaged in the storage and distribution of foodstuffs and other products are listed below.

(a) The State Enterprise for Trade and Processing of Grain engages in the purchase of wheat, lentils and chick-peas, and the import of wheat, flour, capital goods and spare parts to meet its own needs and those of its subsidiary companies in order to satisfy domestic demand for those foodstuffs.

(b) The State Flour Milling Company is responsible for managing, maintaining and developing the country's flour mills (belonging to the public sector), as well as one lentil-processing plant. It owns 11 mills in the various governorates, which process more than 1 million tons of wheat per year.

(c) The State Bakery Company; from 1976 to 1985, the number of the company's various bakeries and production lines increased as follows: from 21 bakeries, comprising 26 production lines for long French-type bread in 1976 it grew to 86 bakeries in 1985, comprising the following production lines: 112 production lines producing ordinary flat bread; 60 production lines producing flat bread of higher-quality blended flour; 26 production lines producing long French-type bread and Arab sweet pastry. Bread production increased from 18,320 tons in 1976 to 391,210 tons by the end of 1985. From the beginning of 1986 to 31 August 1986, the number of bakeries increased to 90,

comprising the following production lines: 1,080 production lines producing flat bread; 91 production lines producing ordinary bread; 26 production lines producing long French-type bread.

(d) The Board of Mechanized Bakeries operates 180 mechanized bread production lines producing (in addition to the output of the Bakery Company) 314,000 tons of bread per year (1979-1984).

(e) The Board of Reserve Bakeries operates 45 reserve bakeries producing 175,000 tons of high-quality bread per annum.

(f) The State Enterprise for Consumer Goods; its function is to ensure that the local markets are always supplied with foodstuffs and other consumables, while maintaining appropriate commercial and strategic reserves. In 1986 it sold goods to a value of 2,065,212,000 Syrian pounds. The enterprise operates through its distribution outlets in the town centres, outlying areas and some of the major districts, which numbered 108 in 1986.

(g) The State Retail Company engages in retail trade in foodstuffs and other products on a country-wide scale through consumer retail outlets, market halls and shopping centres. From 1 January to 30 August 1986 the company's sales amounted to 917 million Syrian pounds. As at 30 June 1986, the company was operating 940 outlets retailing foodstuffs (tea, sugar, rice, oil, ghee, etc).

(h) Consumer co-operatives; by 1985, there were 75 such co-operatives controlling 400 sales outlets throughout the country, with a membership of 201,535 and a capital of 7,184,860 Syrian pounds. They sold goods to the value of 364 million Syrian pounds through their shops and sales outlets.

(i) The State Enterprise for the Distribution of Textile Products engages in the wholesale and retail trade and domestic distribution of textiles manufactured or imported by companies in the public sector, including underwear and outer garments, carpets, etc. Its sales up to 31 August 1986 amounted to 261,333,000 Syrian pounds and its purchases over the same period to 217,448,000 Syrian pounds.

(j) The State Company for the Management of Grain Silos and Seed and Fodder Stores manages and operates the specialized silos and warehouses at the places of production, consumption and export, in addition to selecting, classifying and producing seed processed at the seed centres, and processing concentrated and super-concentrated fodder. The following is an overview of the company's activities in 1985 and the first half of 1986:

Silos:

Total capacity: 770,000 tons of grain;
Grain turnover in the silos in 1985: 4.5 million tons;
Grain turnover in the silos up to 31 August 1986: 3.8 million tons;

Increase in silo storage capacity:

The company is supervising the expansion and construction of new silos, with a total capacity of 730,000 tons.

(k) The State Storage and Refrigeration Company is an economic organization consisting of a network of economic units which specializes in the management and operation of storage and refrigeration facilities and a fleet of refrigerated trucks for foodstuffs (chicken, meat, eggs, cheese, potatoes, apples, citrus fruit, cream, butter, fish, mortadella and other imported and local animal products), serving the public, private and mixed co-operative sectors for a fixed commission. By 1986, 28 storage and refrigeration units were operational with a storage capacity of 278,651 cubic metres, distributed among the various governorates of the country and containing some 56,000 tons of agricultural produce and animal products, in addition to a mobile refrigerated storage facility comprising 20 refrigerated trucks with an annual capacity of 156,000 tons.

(l) The State Fruit and Vegetable Company; its purpose is to supply fruit and vegetables for marketing domestically and abroad and distribution to consumers and retailers in order to meet domestic demand for such foodstuffs. By the end of 1985, it had 103 market halls retailing to consumers, a figure that had risen to 117 by the first half of 1986;

(m) The State Meat Company procures meat products to meet the needs of the city of Damascus, the surrounding countryside and the armed forces. It also supplies a number of meat sales centres in the governorates. The company has 19 retail outlets in Damascus, in addition to the centres of the State Fruit and Vegetable Company (32), the centres of the State Retail Company (40) and the co-operative centres (30), and also supplies the government hospitals in the city of Damascus, as well as 17 clubs and other establishments. In the other governorates, meat is supplied by the private sector. As at 31 March 1986, the value of the company's purchases amounted to 766,387,000 Syrian pounds, including domestic purchases to the value of 746,117,000 Syrian pounds and foreign purchases to the value of 20,270,000 Syrian pounds. Its sales amounted to 621,809,000 Syrian pounds.

69. The laws governing foodstuffs in the Syrian Arab Republic, which date back to the 1970s, as well as subsequent developments in that respect, are based on two principles, namely: the protection of consumers against sudden prices rises, such as those that occur in the international markets, by subsidizing the prices of staple foodstuffs such as bread, edible oils, cooking butter, tea, rice and sugar, on which the Government loses billions of Syrian pounds; and assistance to consumers in procuring food conforming to the health laws at all times and at suitable prices.

70. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has devoted special attention to the provision and improvement of housing and the creation of a healthy and safe environment by providing modern service facilities. The serious attention and efforts devoted to those issues are reflected in the recommendations adopted by the Eighth National Conference of the Arab Baath Socialist Party, which guides society and the State in Syria. These include the following:

(a) Emphasis should be placed on the balanced development of services and the reduction of disparities in the availability and quality of the services rendered to citizens, as between the various governorates on the one hand, and between rural and urban areas of the same governorates on the other;

(b) The master plans of towns and villages should meet the population's need for public facilities and services, and the necessary land should be set aside for that purpose for a period of 25 years at least;

(c) Housing should continue to be provided for all persons whose homes are due to be demolished, in accordance with a schedule taking account of development project priorities and available material resources;

(d) Basic service and commercial facilities should be provided in the new residential districts on a scale proportionate to that of housing construction and within the framework of the master plans covering the areas to be built up;

(e) Studies should be conducted to identify locations in the countryside, outside agricultural land, suitable for the construction of model villages, and the necessary services should be provided;

(f) Public sector housing should be given broad support with a view to the construction of residential units;

(g) Housing co-operatives should be supported and provided with the necessary land and loans;

(h) More controls should be introduced to regulate the investment of private savings in low-cost housing.

71. The rate of population growth in the Syrian Arab Republic is one of the highest in the world, at 33.6 per thousand in the period 1970-1981. The population doubled between 1960 and 1970, and rose again from 4.53 million in 1970 to 8.991 million in 1981. The high population growth rate is attributable to a number of factors, the most significant of which is the quantitative and qualitative improvement in living standards and services, even in the most remote rural areas, and the consequent decline in mortality. The country's population grew to 10,267,000 in 1985 and 10,612,000 in 1986.

72. The population distribution points to an increase in urbanization at the expense of rural areas, which accounted for 50.9 per cent of the total population in 1986, compared with 61 per cent in 1960.

73. In the public sector (governmental and public bodies), overall responsibility for housing lies with the Ministry of Housing and Utilities, whose basic functions, which consist primarily in endeavours to meet the need for housing and utilities, are defined in Act No. 96/1974, under the terms of which it was established and which stipulate as follows:

Article 1: The Ministry shall undertake the following functions:

Paragraph 2 (a): Housing affairs: With a view to dealing with the housing problem and ensuring the availability of salubrious dwellings, the Ministry shall undertake the following tasks:

Article 2:

(a) Propose the general policy in regard to housing and utilities;

(b) Prepare annual and five-year plans;

(c) Supervise the public bodies operating in the housing and utilities sector;

(e) Conduct research and studies;

(g) Draft legislation, rules and regulations.

Article 3: It shall undertake the following tasks in regard to housing affairs:

(a) Establish new residential districts in areas with an expanding population and locate population agglomerations outside areas with an expanding population. To this end, it may:

(i) Appropriate the requisite land;

(ii) Prepare plans and building regulations for the newly established districts;

(iii) Divide the appropriated land into plots on site;

(iv) Sell the said plots before or after the construction of dwellings thereon;

(b) Participate in the formulation of proposals concerning housing rent levels;

(c) Participate in the formulation of a financing, savings and loan policy with a view to ensuring the implementation of the adopted housing plan;

(e) Take measures to encourage the private and co-operative sectors to play a more active role in the housing sphere;

(f) Establish standard rules of procedure for housing co-operatives.

74. Mention must also be made of the Public Housing Authority which, as an organ of the Ministry of Housing and Utilities, plays a significant role in the study and implementation of housing plans. The functions of this Authority, which was established in 1961 under the terms of Presidential Decree No. 683, include supervision of the implementation of Act No. 38 of 1978, concerning savings for home ownership, articles 2 and 4 of which highlight the principal objectives of the Act:

Article 2: The Authority shall, on request, build dwellings ready for occupation by savers and the bank shall collect the money from them and grant loans to them and to the Authority in accordance with the provisions of this Act;

Article 4 (a): Any citizen wishing to obtain a dwelling from the Authority shall be entitled to participate in the savings scheme for home ownership on submitting an application to the Authority, indicating his said wish and specifying the area in which he is interested. The category of dwelling selected shall correspond to the monthly amount that he undertakes to save.

75. Various legislative enactments have been promulgated in connection with housing provided by the private sector, including Act No. 9 of 1974, concerning town planning and development, Act No. 14, concerning the development of vacant lots, which encourages citizens to acquire vacant lots and prepare them for use as sites for building projects, Act No. 60 of 1979, which facilitates the acquisition of land ready for building, and Legislative Decree No. 5 of 1982, which regulates town planning and the use of land and defines the utilities required and the building regulations to be observed.

76. The following facts should also be noted:

(a) There are no homeless persons in Syria;

(b) The housing problem is encountered mainly in the principal cities (the administrative centres of the governorates);

(c) The aim of providing sufficient housing has been achieved to a large extent, in a manner consistent with the population growth;

(d) The efforts still required relate primarily to:

(i) The improvement of housing and the development of services and utilities in the population agglomerations;

(ii) The achievement of an urban/rural balance in order to promote demographic and residential stability;

(iii) The use and development of land for housing in order to minimize the area of waste or under-utilized land;

(iv) The need to preserve a clean and healthy environment, protected from all forms of rural and urban pollution;

(e) Observance, to the greatest possible extent, of the principle that housing has a social function and is not a commercial commodity;

(f) Every citizen has a right to housing and society and the public authorities have an obligation to help citizens to exercise this right, since no person should be homeless on Syrian territory.

C. Article 12. The right to enjoy physical and mental health

77. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic accords priority to programmes designed to reduce morbidity and mortality and protect children and the family. Its commitment in this respect is expressed in the Constitution of the State and also in various resolutions adopted at Party congresses. The Ministry of Health, with assistance from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, has carried out several evaluations of the situation

and of the country's needs in regard to maternal and child health services and family planning. The Ministry of Health is also making intensive endeavours to reduce infant mortality, the rate of which has been reduced from more than 100 per thousand in 1975 to 55 per thousand at the present time. The Ministry is also making great efforts in the field of pre-natal care:

(a) A comprehensive programme for preventive pre-natal care has been introduced, under which expectant mothers pay 11 visits to the clinic for medical examination, laboratory and radiographic tests and anti-tetanus innoculations;

(b) Intensive endeavours have been made to increase the number of maternal and child care and family planning clinics in order to make pre-natal services available to women. The number of these clinics incresed from 101 in 1980 to 350 in 1987;

(c) The maternal and child care clinics are co-operating closely with the maternity (pre-natal) clinics, as a result of which the proportion of expectant mothers enjoying health care services rose from 10 per cent in 1980 to 16 per cent in 1987.

78. The Ministry of Health shows great concern for maternity services in view of their considerable importance for the health of mothers and children. Accordingly, it endeavours to arrange for delivery at clinics or in private homes with the assistance of trained midwives and, to this end, has taken the following steps:

(a) The number of maternity beds in clinics has been increased and rural clinics have been established in which considerable space is allocated to maternity wards;

(b) The number of graduates from schools of midwifery has increased and new sections have been established for the training of assistant nurses/midwives. As a result, the number of graduating midwives rose from 90 in 1970 to 277 in 1986;

(c) Assistant public health nurse/midwife has been established as a new functional title in the medical profession;

(d) Training is being provided for rural midwives who learnt their profession from their mothers or neighbours rather than in nursing or midwifery schools.

79. As a result of the increase in the number of maternal and child care centres in Syria, the number of children enjoying health care rose from 8 per cent in 1980 to 18 per cent at the end of 1987. The following achievements have been made in this respect:

(a) A preventive child care programme has been organized, consisting in 11 visits to the doctor over a period of five years, during which the child undergoes seven periodic examinations, three radiographic examinations and three laboratory tests and receives all the vaccinations at the prescribed times;

(b) An expanded programme has been organized, comprising four vaccinations against the six enteric diseases responsible for 15 per cent of infant mortality. In 1986, this programme was promoted through a country-wide campaign during which 80 per cent of all Syrian children received the four basic vaccinations;

(c) A programme has been organized to combat the various forms of diarrhoea responsible for 25 per cent of infant mortality. Under this programme, doctors and assistant physicians are made aware of the dangers of diarrhoea, as well as of methods of prevention and treatment, and mothers are taught how to prevent diarrhoea and to care for sick children by administering anti-dehydration salts, which are produced and made available to the population in both urban and rural areas.

80. The Ministry of Health encourages breast-feeding which, although it constituted the sole method of infant nutrition in Syria 50 years ago, has since declined, for well-known reasons, in almost all parts of the world.

81. The Ministry of Health also attaches importance to family-planning services within the context of preventive health care for mothers and children. Advice and guidance is provided concerning the need for an interval of at least three years between births for demographic and health reasons.

82. The Ministry of Health also attaches considerable importance to nutrition, particularly in the case of categories at risk (mothers and children under school age), in view of the fact that nutrition has an effect on the growth and development of children, as well as on the health of expectant mothers and their unborn children. In this respect, the Ministry has taken the following steps:

(a) In 1981, it conducted a survey of the nutritional situation of children up to five years of age;

(b) In 1987, it conducted a second survey of the nutritional situation of children in the same age group;

(c) In collaboration with the World Food Programme, it has implemented a supplementary nutrition plan for the provision of milk, flour and sugar for all needy children and mothers, under which these foodstuffs are supplied to a total of 18,000 children and 12,000 expectant and breast-feeding mothers.

83. The Ministry has also organized information programmes on the importance of nutrition for categories at risk and on methods of preparing wholesome meals from ingredients available in the home.

84. As an expression of the State's concern for child health, the Council of Ministers has promulgated a decree establishing the Higher Council for Child Welfare, which is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for Public Services and includes among its members the Ministers of Health, Social Affairs and Education, as well as representatives of the Women's Federation, the Workers' Federation, the Shabiba (Youth) and Tala'i (Vanguard) organizations, the Ministries of Culture, Health and Justice and the Public Radio and Television Authority. The Higher Council, which is responsible for improving the health,

cultural and social situation of children, has established a technical committee to prepare a standard child health card which will be distributed to children throughout the country in 1988. This card contains a record of the child's health, showing details of all illnesses, accidents and periodic examinations, and also includes many instructive pages concerning the most important aspects of child health.

85. Article 39 of the Party Constitution contains the following stipulation in regard to public health: "The State shall establish, at its expense, preventive health institutions, clinics ad hospitals to meet fully the needs of all citizens and ensure their treatment free of charge."

86. In this connection, article 46 of the Constitution stipulates as follows:

> "1. The State shall provide for all citizens and their families in the event of an accident, sickness, disability or orphanhood and in old age.
>
> "2. The State shall protect the health of its citizens and provide them with preventive, curative and medicative facilities."

87. Under the terms of Administrative Decree No. 18/T of 1962, all patients attending tuberculosis and infectious disease centres and clinics, sanatoria for the treatment of leprosy and psychiatric disorders and maternal and child care centres are exempted from payment of the costs of examination, medication and accommodation in the institution concerned.

88. Under Legislative Decree No. 9 of 1971, all citizens requiring urgent medical assistance are exempted from payment of the costs of medication and other medical expenses.

89. Under Legislative Decree No. 74 of 1974, persons afflicted or suspected of being afflicted with malignant tumours are exempted from all costs of treatment, including diagnostic examinations and therapeutic services, in the specialized State-owned institutions.

90. The Health Insurance Act. No. 1 of 1979 provides for the gradual coverage of the whole population on the basis of participation by citizens in the nominal costs of treatment. However, this scheme has not yet been put into effect due to financial difficulties.

91. The successive five-year health plans, which have laid down the basis on which the State can assume responsibility for the health of its citizens, constitute the mainstay of its strategy for the achievement of its health-related targets within the context of overall socio-economic development.

92. The network of health service institutions comprises:

(a) Public health centres, including basic health service units, dental surgeries and maternal and child care centres in urban and rural areas;

(b) Specialized health centres: one tuberculosis centre in each governorate and one or more epidemic disease centre (malaria, bilharziasis, leishmaniasis, etc.) in each governorate in a manner commensurate with the epidemic prevalence of those diseases;

(c) Intermediate public hospitals, providing the principal public health services (internal medicine, surgery, paediatrics and obstetrics) in the main cities and provincial administrative centres;

(d) Public polyclinics;

(e) Specialized hospitals for ophthalmic treatment, paediatrics, maternity, heart surgery and the treatment of tumours in the principal governorates;

(f) General practice surgeries, which refer patients, as appropriate, for various levels of treatment at health centres or hospitals;

(g) Public training centres for maternal and child care and family planning;

(h) A public ambulance service in the cities and on the main highways.

93. There are 499 health centres, of which 72 per cent are in rural areas and 28 per cent in urban areas. These centres, each of which serves an average of 21,000 persons, include 240 maternal and child care and family planning units.

94. The specialized health centres comprise 13 anti-tuberculosis, 14 anti-malaria and 7 anti-bilharziasis centres.

95. There are 11 training centres for maternal and child care and family planning.

96. The number of hospitals currently amounts to 213, containing 16,520 beds in a ratio of one bed for every 642 citizens.

97. The Training Hospital at Damascus, with a 650-bed capacity, is due to be opened in the near future. Work is also approaching completion on the construction and equipment of 6 large hospitals with a 2,300-bed capacity, as well as of 21 smaller provincial hospitals, each with a 120-200 bed capacity; a further 2,550 beds are available at other existing hospitals and centres for heart surgery, kidney grafts and nuclear medicine and in the country-wide network of dialysis units.

98. Numerous specialized activities are undertaken in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA, such as: vaccinations, anti-malaria and anti-bilharziasis campaigns, endeavours to combat diseases transmissible to humans from animals, occupational health, mental and neurological health, environmental health, maternal and child care, protection from diarrhoea, functional rehabilitation, radiographic surveys, primary health care and a number of other activities aimed at providing the labour force with medical and nursing instruction.

99. The teaching and training institutions comprise medical, dental and pharmaceutical colleges, intermediate medical institutes and nursing and midwifery schools.

100. The country currently has three medical colleges from which about 1,000 physicians graduate every year, three dental colleges from which about 400 dentists graduate every year and a pharmaceutical college from which about 300 pharmacists graduate every year.

101. These colleges include various departments for specialized higher studies, and physicians receive specialized training as resident interns at the hospitals run by the Ministry of Health. The nine intermediate medical institutes, from which about 700 students graduate every year, train assistant public health technicians to work in laboratories, dispensaries and radiographic units, to provide anaesthetic and physiotherapeutic services, to maintain medical and dental equipment and to render nursing services. The 20 nursing schools distributed throughout the country comprise midwifery, nursing and public health departments from which about 1,000 trainee nurses and midwives graduate every year.

102. At the end of 1986, the number of persons working in the medical profession in the country amounted to:

6,993 physicians, i.e. one physician for every 1,520 citizens;

2,225 dentists, i.e. one dentist for every 4,770 citizens;

2,786 pharmacists, i.e. one pharmacist for every 3,810 citizens;

6,200 technical assistants i.e. one technical assistant for every 1,710 citizens;

10,355 nurses and midwives, i.e. a ratio of 1 for every 1,025 citizens.

103. Environmental health and working conditions are matters that require concerted endeavours in the agricultural, industrial, irrigation, education, housing, transport and health sectors. Decree No. 339 of 1978 established the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs, which is responsible for the supervision of all activities relating to the co-ordination of efforts to improve the environment. The Prime Minister also promulgated Decision No. 1239 of 1 May 1985, establishing a committee to protect the environment in the territory and in the inland and coastal waters of the State, under the chairmanship of the Minister of State for Environmental Affairs. This central committee has formed 11 sub-committees consisting of specialists on various aspects of environmental health, as well as sub-committees in each governorate, which are chaired by the local governors.

104. A number of programmes are implemented every year, through specialized centres in the various governorates, in accordance with a specific plan for each prevalent disease. These programmes are:

(a) The anti-malaria programme: the number of cases reported decreased from 2,618 in 1969 to 1,481 in 1980 and 145 in 1987;

(b) The anti-tuberculosis programme: the Ministry has established a committee to monitor the fight against diseases that are transmissible from animals to humans.

105. The following health indicators are noteworthy:

(a) The overall mortality rate decreased from 17 per thousand in 1965 to 8 per thousand;

(b) The infant mortality rate decreased from 137 to 60 per thousand during the same period;

(c) Average life expectancy at birth increased from 52 to 64 years.

III. ARTICLES 13 to 15 OF THE COVENANT

A. Articles 13 and 14. The right to education

106. Article 37 of the Constitution stipulates: "The right to education is guaranteed by the State. Education shall be free at all levels and compulsory at the primary level. The State shall endeavour to extend its compulsory nature to other levels and shall supervise and direct education in such a way as to make it consistent with the needs of society and production."

107. Accordingly, education is a right enjoyed by every citizen of the country, without distinction, and is free at all levels, including the university level. The State charges no fees in respect of education.

108. However, this does not prevent the establishment of private schools, which receive fees from students wishing to enrol therein for personal reasons or due to the fact that they have missed the available opportunities to enrol in State schools.

109. University education, which is fully supervised by the State, is free in all fields of study.

110. With regard to the compulsory nature of education, article 2 of Presidential Decree No. 35 of 16 August 1981 stipulates that all parents or guardians of male and female Syrian children between the ages of 6 and 12 years have an obligation to ensure their enrolment at primary schools in accordance with detailed rules and regulations. Article 3 of that decree makes provision for the establishment of a compulsory education office in each governorate, under the chairmanship of the governor and including among its members the director of education, as vice-chairman, and representatives of a number of departments and people's organizations in the governorate, for the purpose of supervising the implementation of the provisions of the decree in accordance with detailed subsequent instructions, which were promulgated in Decree No. 4110/443 of 13 December 1981.

111. Secondary education is available to all students who have completed the primary level. On completion of the preparatory level, which lasts for three years, students have access to new opportunities for industrial, commercial and female education. Each of these types of education is chosen

in accordance with detailed principles and rules concerning age and the grades obtained at the end of the preparatory level when the student is 14 years of age. In general, the opportunities for enrolment in technical schools on completion of the preparatory level are greater than those for continued attendance at schools in the public education system until reaching the age of 17, at which time the student obtains the certificate of secondary education in the field of industry, science or the humanities, provided that he passes the examination.

112. Primary schools have been established in urban and rural areas of the Syrian Arab Republic, even in the most remote districts, and the parents or guardians of students have no excuse to refrain from sending their children to school. The preparatory and secondary schools are distributed in accordance with population density. Instructions concerning the requirements in regard to the establishment of primary and secondary schools, as well as the manner in which they are to be established, were promulgated in Directive No. 1991/543 of 22 July 1975.

113. The State makes special provision for talented and outstanding students and awards grants to the most successful students in the examinations for the preparatory and secondary certificates of education.

114. The State also safeguards the rights of persons working in the teaching profession. There is a Teachers' Union, which has the right to request an improvement in the working conditions and standard of living of its members if it observes any shortcomings or negligence on the part of the authorities in this regard.

115. In addition to the public education system, which is funded and supervised by the State, there are also private schools, as already mentioned, which are usually established by private educational bodies or institutions. Naturally, they must all follow the syllabuses established by the State. If necessary, subject to approval by the competent education authorities, private schools may be permitted to teach the liturgical language used by a particular community in its religious worship. These private schools, which are supervised by the Directorate of Private Education at the Ministry of Education, are governed by the provisions of the Private Education Act. No. 160 of 1958.

116. Under article 2, paragraph (b), of Act No. 35, children between the ages of 10 and 12 enter special classes attached to the primary school, in which they follow a syllabus laid down by the Ministry. After three years of study, they are awarded a certificate of completion of their primary education. Under paragraph (c), the Ministry monitors the continued education of registered pupils within the compulsory education age group until they have completed their primary education, even if they are over the age of 12.

117. Article 3 makes provision for the establishment of a compulsory education office in each governorate.

118. Other articles of the Act stipulate as follows:

Article 4: The following bodies shall assume responsibility for compulsory education, each within its own field of competence, in accordance with the plan formulated by the Ministry: the Ministries of Education, the Interior, Information, Local Administration, Finance, Social Affairs and Labour and the people's organizations and trade unions;

Article 5: If a parent or guardian fails to comply with the provisions of article 2 of this Act, he shall be given a formal warning by the office. If, within 10 days, he has still not sent the child to school, he shall be liable to the following penalties: a fine of LS 500; in the event of a repeated offence, imprisonment for a period of up to one month, together with a fine not exceeding LS 1,000;

Article 6: any person who employs a child at the age of compulsory education shall be punished by imprisonment for a period of two months, or a fine of LS 1,000. In the event of a repeated offence, the penalty shall be doubled and the establishment in which the child was employed shall be closed for two months;

Article 7: Public proceedings shall be instituted in the cases referred to in articles 5 to 6, at the request of the Minister, on the basis of a proposal by the office in the governorate;

Article 8 (a): The office may grant incentive payments to the following categories: compulsory education inspectors; central and district secretaries; teachers in category (b); teachers who help to identify children not enrolled at school; pupils subject to compulsory education;

Article 8 (b): The incentive payments granted in accordance with paragraph (a) above shall be made within the limits of the funds allocated for that purpose in the budget of the department of education in the governorate (compulsory primary education).

119. The Ministry of Education made a diligent and consistent endeavour to ensure compulsory education throughout the country and to achieve the quantitative and qualitative targets during the academic year 1985/86, using methods of persuasion and inducement to encourage children to continue their education on a voluntary basis. To that end, the Ministry formulated an interim plan of action for compulsory education in the academic year 1985/86, which specified the general objectives of ensuring compulsory education through the enrolment of all children between the ages of 6 and 12 at primary schools and the continuation of their education to the end of the primary level.

B. Article 15. The right to participate in cultural life, and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress, and protection of the interests of authors

120. Article 2 of Legislative Decree No. 197 of 23 November 1958, as amended, concerning the organization of the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance, and the attachment of some departments thereto, stipulates that the task of the Ministry is as follows: to make knowledge and culture accessible to the

public at large; to promote and propagate the message of Arab civilization and provide all the facilities needed to place it on an equal footing with other major world civilizations; to provide the people with sound national guidance, with a view to developing their national awareness, helping them to improve their social standards, strengthening their morale and their sense of responsibility, and encouraging them to co-operate, make sacrifices and intensify their efforts to serve their country and mankind; to make popular culture available to the masses, diversifying its methods, broadening its scope and enriching it with the latest discoveries in order to benefit the widest section of society; to establish contact with foreign cultural and artistic institutions, with a view to benefiting from their activities and inviting leading cultural, intellectual and artistic personalities throughout the world to visit Syria and deliver lectures in its various cities; to apply, within its field of competence, the provisions of the cultural agreements concluded with foreign governments; to organize cultural and artistic exhibitions, fairs, and festivals; to hold conferences, organize competitions, award prizes and promote the establishment of various cultural associations, monitoring their activities and helping them to carry out their tasks; to revive the time-honoured Arab scientific and literary heritage, carrying out research into Arabic lexicography with a view to its preservation and the inclusion therein of modern scientific and technical terminology; to uncover Syria's archaeological and historical heritage, gathering, preserving and protecting all its constituent elements for future generations; to establish archaeological, historical, artistic and popular museums and help to organize other museums belonging to other government ministries, their departments and public institutions; to encourage literature and the arts, directing them in the manner required by the interests of the State, promoting their dissemination, safeguarding their future, and ensuring the livelihood and welfare of their professional practitioners; and to develop and promote popular art and literature and gather all the information available thereon.

121. In the present age of science and technology and the upsurge of knowledge, ideas and cultural challenges, the question of the eradication of illiteracy can no longer be viewed from the blinkered standpoint of traditional thinking, which lacks not only comprehensiveness but also a revolutionary spirit and awareness of the nature and the present and future strategic dimensions of the problem. On the contrary, it must be viewed from a comprehensive, revolutionary standpoint in order to define its dimensions and dangers and make plans to confront and eliminate them in a scientific manner.

122. The principles on which the Arab Baath Socialist Party is based emphasize the importance of confronting this baneful phenomenon. Since its establishment, the Party has also emphasized, in its thought and practice, that the human person is an extremely valuable asset in the historical progress of society, being both the end and the means in the overall process of evolution towards a unified, free and socialist society. The ideological principles of the Party stress the importance of the diligent promotion of education, as both a right and a duty of all citizens, on a basis of give and take. The Party has adopted the principle of educational democracy as a slogan for socio-economic development and qualitative change in the intellectual and vocational activities of citizens, with a view to creating a modern society that remains in step with the course of human civilization while at the same time preserving the time-honoured heritage of the Arab nation.

123. The principal provisions of the Eradication of Illiteracy Act No. 7 of 1972, which constitutes a significant leap forward in the struggle to eradicate illiteracy, are as follows:

(a) All illiterate citizens over 8 and under 45 years of age who are not enrolled at a school must attend classes for the eradication of illiteracy;

(b) All educated persons over 18 years of age must contribute to the campaign to eradicate illiteracy;

(c) The Ministry of Education must provide compulsory education for all children who have attained the age of six years;

(d) The Ministry of Defence must educate illiterate conscripts and eradicate illiteracy among them before the completion of the period of their compulsory military service;

(e) A special fund to finance the campaign for the country-wide eradication of illiteracy shall be established and attached to the Higher Council for the Eradication of Illiteracy. Its tasks shall be: to formulate and adopt the various procedures, syllabuses and programmes needed for the education of illiterate persons; to specify the standard to be achieved; and to define the responsibilities of all official and popular bodies in regard to the plan to eradicate illiteracy.

124. In 1976, the Ministry of Education was awarded the UNESCO Nadezhda Krupskaya Prize on the occasion of International Day for the Eradication of Illiteracy in view of the care that it had taken to prepare the books needed at the follow-up stage, and also for other reasons, such as its diligent endeavours to eradicate illiteracy in rural areas.

125. In 1959, the Ministry of Culture established people's cultural institutes with a view to providing their students with cultural, scientific, artistic and vocational know-how, disseminating knowledge of Arab civilization and the Arab world, encouraging social activity and promoting a spirit of co-operation among citizens. There are also cultural centres; mobile cultural units, which screen educational films in rural areas; farmers' cultural institutes; workers' cultural institutes; vocational rehabilitation centres; productivity centres; centres established by other people's organizations; vocational training centres; rural revival centres; agricultural extension units; and health centres, which promote health awareness.

126. With regard to the dissemination of scientific and technological know-how within the context of the activities undertaken outside schools, during the first week of February 1983, the Ministries of Culture and Education, in collaboration with UNESCO, organized a workshop for male and female natural science teachers, with a view to providing simplified instruction in scientific subjects for women and girls outside the context of academic syllabuses. The purpose of this workshop was, first, to produce simplified scientific educational material for printing and distribution among the target social groups, as a first step in this regard and, secondly, to seek help from the workshop participants in the implementation of the programmes of training courses for male and female teachers recruited to organize eradication of illiteracy classes, and also in the holding of seminars on such subjects.

127. Efforts are continuing in this connection, with a view to the dissemination of scientific and technological know-how within the context of the activities that are being undertaken outside the schools.

128. The Ministry produces and disseminates cultural material and is endeavouring to establish a network of cultural channels through its centres located in all parts of the country. At the present time, it has 80 cultural centres with libraries, 29 mobile cultural units, 45 people's cultural institutes, 40 library stations and 16 theatres equipped with the most modern technological facilities, including 40 projectors for the screening of 35 mm and 16 mm cinematographic and documentary films, some of which are produced locally while others are imported or donated to the Ministry by political and scientific bodies and institutions. The Ministry also has an ambitious plan for the establishment of other such centres both in Syria and abroad, including three Arab cultural centres at Nouakchott, São Paulo and Paris.

129. The cultural services provided by these centres may be summarized as follows: the lectures focus on patriotism, the value of national struggle in Arab history and the history of mankind in general and the need to combat racial, ethnic and religious discrimination in all its dimensions, forms and designations.

130. The centres provide services for readers and researchers through their libraries, which contain more than 1 million books, published in various languages, on a variety of scientific and educational subjects from a national, progressive and humanitarian standpoint. Special attention is accorded to children, for whom separate reading rooms are set aside. These services are used by more than 1 million readers each year.

131. The people's cultural institutes help to develop the skills, aptitudes and occupational capacities of their members by providing the knowledge required. These institutes are attended by more than 25,000 male and female students every year.

132. With regard to audio-visual material, the Ministry provides the cultural centres with 16 mm and 35 mm films, as well as video and audio tapes, in the selection of which emphasis is placed on world-wide national liberation issues, the defence of human rights against all forms of persecution, oppression and racism, and other subjects of an instructive and generally humanitarian nature. In this connection, the Ministry collaborates with cinema clubs and the embassies of sister and friendly States.

The Al-Assad Library

133. The library, containing books and manuscripts, which was established on 26 July 1983, is the official National Library of the Syrian Arab Republic. Intellectuals from all parts of the world deliver lectures there and it is also used for the holding of international conferences, seminars and exhibitions. It is visited by international artistic troupes and international films are screened there. It has concluded a number of bilateral agreements with national libraries throughout the world.

Publications

134. Since its establishment, the Ministry has published books and periodicals in which it has made a diligent effort to cover various forms of culture and knowledge. Thirty per cent of the books published by the Ministry are written by Syrian and other Arab authors, the other 70 per cent consisting in Arabic translations of foreign books on scientific, literary and humanitarian subjects.

135. The books published by the Ministry during the last 10 years cover most fields of Arab and international culture and knowledge, humanitarian studies, philosophy, psychology, sociology, economics, politics, geography, history, the cultural heritage, Islamic studies and various types and branches of literature. The books produced or translated by the Ministry deal with all contemporary problems in a fully open-minded spirit receptive to all intellectual tendencies. The Ministry rejects only books which attack the divinely revealed religions or are of a low moral or scientific standard.

136. The Ministry prints 2,000 to 5,000 copies of each book; however, in the case of books on the Arab heritage, the figure may be as high as 10,000 copies.

137. The books are sold to the public at the 14 retail outlets in the cultural and administrative centres of the governorates and also through the sub-outlets in the smaller towns and suburbs. Furthermore, the Ministry's books may be found at local exhibitions in the governorates and also at universities and cultural institutions. The books are sold to the public at a nominal charge of 60 per cent of the price marked on the cover.

138. The Ministry participates in book exhibitions in foreign countries, where one or two copies of a large number of its published titles are displayed. On the conclusion of the exhibition, those books are donated to the organizers. The Ministry also participates in most Arab book fairs, at which its publications are displayed and sold to the public at special discounts.

139. One thousand copies are printed of each of the following magazines published by the Ministry:

Al-Maa ifa: a monthly magazine on general culture and miscellaneous studies;

Usama: bi-monthly, on children's literature;

Kitab Usama: monthly, on children's literature;

Al-Hayat al-Masrahiya: periodical, on the theatre and local, Arab and international theatrical studies;

Al-Hayat al-Tashkiliya: on local, Arab and international fine arts;

Al-Hayat al-Sinama iya: on local, Arab and international cinematographic arts;

Al-Hawliyat al-Athariya: periodical, on archaeology and museums.

The cinema

140. The Public Cinematographic Authority produces instructive films and promotes the film industry in the country. It safeguards the rights of artists, takes measures to ensure standard non-commercial production for the preservation of culture, and guarantees the freedom of artists within the limits of the public interest.

The theatrical arts

141. The Ministry's troupes have performed a number of theatrical works by international playwrights of all races and colours. They have also performed theatrical works which condemn racial discrimination, such as the play "If people were to see us together".

142. They have participated in international festivals, side by side with multi-racial troupes from all parts of the world, thereby providing an opportunity for the public to attend performances of theatrical and cultural works from a number of countries in the third world. For the last 20 years, the Ministry has been organizing the Damascus Festival of Theatrical Arts and the Busra International Festival of Popular Arts, in which artistic troupes from various countries of the world take part.

The Higher Institute of Theatrical Art

143. One of the main aims of the Institute is to stimulate proper awareness of the importance of culture in all its forms, and particularly theatrical culture. The Institute achieves this aim through direct teaching, diligent scientific research in fields of national theatrical culture and the staging of performances to reach a broader section of the public.

144. The Institute's syllabuses emphasize freedom as a primary factor in the promotion of culture and all forms of creative activity. Accordingly, the Institute has adopted the method of discussion and diligent quest for the truth rather than the method of dogmatic instruction.

145. The Institute believes that international communication and co-operation are basic requirements for cultural and scientific development and is therefore co-operating closely with similar institutes in all parts of the world. It has concluded cultural agreements with the central institutes in Moscow, Strasbourg, Warsaw and in the United Kingdom. The Institute also co-operates closely with UNESCO through the International Theatre Institute, of which the dean of the Syrian Institute is the vice-chairman. The Syrian Institute also collaborates with the International Institute's national centres and participates in their seminars and festivals. This co-operation will be crowned by the holding of the session of the International Theatre University at Damascus at the end of 1988.

146. The General Directorate of Archaeology and Museums was established after independence, with a view to uncovering, maintaining and protecting the cultural heritage of the Syrian Arab Republic and acquainting the public with the glorious legacy of past generations. The General Directorate is still pursuing this lofty task in a highly commendable manner. It is conducting

archaeological excavations in various parts of the country, with a view to uncovering the relics of the civilizations which flourished in its territory during various historical periods. It also maintains, restores and repairs historical monuments, establishes new museums and maintains existing museums, which it supplies with collections of unearthed antiquities. It also organizes exhibitions, conferences and seminars to familiarize citizens and foreigners with Syria's cultural heritage and, to this end adopts the most modern methods and scientific theories.

147. The General Directorate's plan of action for the establishment and restoration of museums during the period 1958-1987 was pursued in the following three stages: stage I. from 1958 to 1970; stage II. from 1970 to 1980 (comprising the third and fourth five-year plans); stage III. from 1980 to 1987 (comprising the fifth and the beginning of the sixth five-year plan).